

GUIDE GETTING YOUR SMALL BUSINESS TO AND THROUGH THE CLOUD—THE 411 ON GETTING MORE FROM YOUR MICROSOFT 365 INVESTMENT



When you hear terms like “cloud architecture” or “cloud services” you may think only sizable organizations can support and afford such systems.

That’s definitely not the case.

In 2020, over 80 percent of small businesses said their goal was to deploy cloud computing. Some of the many advantages cloud computing offers for small businesses include:

- Flexibility, agility, and scalability
- Growing faster and better
- Cutting costs
- Enhancing security

The go-to program for many small businesses across the world? Microsoft 365—Microsoft’s cloud-based suite of productivity and work apps.

We’ll walk you through:

SECTION I. Why Small Businesses Should Invest in Cloud

SECTION II: Types of Cloud Computing Deployment Models

SECTION III: Cloud Tools and Packages for Small Businesses

SECTION IV: How to Maximize Your Microsoft 365 Investment



I. Why Should Small Businesses Invest in Cloud in the First Place?

1. IT'S EASIER ON YOUR WALLET.

You know the expression “bang for your buck?” You get much more “bang” with the cloud for way fewer bucks—and in a small business, every dollar matters.

Consider on-premise software. It involves server hardware, software licenses, and in-person installation, maintenance, and technical support. Factor in infrastructure and operating costs. What if you need to update or add users? You may need to call an IT specialist for an in-house visit. Additionally, you'll need ways to process and back up data, which could mean more hardware.

Since the cloud is virtual, you won't need expensive hardware or rely on in-person installation and support. Usually, there's a nominal, pay-as-you-go subscription fee. The updates are automatic and you save on cabling and repair costs. You also won't have to pay for data processing and backup hardware and programs. With cloud, your information lives in a remote, highly regulated data center.

2. GREATER SECURITY, FEWER DISRUPTIONS.

As mentioned before, you don't need in-house or external IT support to update and manage servers and antivirus programs. Cloud services preserve data safety through premiere support, granular control, and permissions over who can access information.

Cloud systems regularly and automatically update your security patches, new features, bug fixes, and other categories. They can also shut off a part of the system if something is affecting the platform's overall security.

However, you'll have fewer disturbances with the cloud than you would with on-premise solutions. With a system that depends on in-house hardware, a power outage, cyber attack, or outer accident could dramatically impact your business operations. Since cloud data lives off-site, you can easily restore it in an emergency and get your systems up and running again.



3. SCALABILITY AND COLLABORATION ARE SEAMLESS.

You may need to rejigger your systems and programs with hardware-based solutions to accommodate new users. With cloud, scaling is quick and easy. You can:

- Easily add or remove users or features.
- Move your system to a different server or access it on multiple devices, local or globally.
- Take advantage of included software and features that cloud service systems usually have.
- Grow along with your business or adapt to changing demand.

Secondly, the cloud significantly enhances collaboration. Multiple colleagues can access information and files on any device in any location or time zone, and work together in real-time. This improves brainstorming and greatly accelerates a project's life cycle.

Thinking more about cloud adoption? The next section discusses the best computing models for different organizations and their specific needs.

II. Types of cloud deployment systems

There are four major types of cloud deployment systems:

- Public
- Private
- Crowd
- Hybrid

A. Public cloud: Third-party servers that anyone can use for computing resources, storage, and deployment applications. They're free or payable through a pay-per-use subscription. You won't need equipment or hardware—a cloud service provider (CSP) owns and maintains the server.

Some examples of public clouds include Amazon Web Services (AWS), Microsoft Azure, Google App Engine, and IBM Cloud.

The advantages of public cloud computing models are:

- They're budget-friendly because they don't require setup costs. You use a pay-per-use subscription.
- They're easy to set up.
- They offer on-demand scalability. Add or subtract users and features easily.

Their drawbacks are:

- Offers limited visibility and control over your cloud environment.
- It's more of a one-size-fits-all solution.

B. Private cloud: A one-on-one exclusive cloud server intended to be used by a single company. That company can manage the cloud or outsource it to a managed service provider—like MicroTech.

Examples of companies that provide private cloud solutions include Amazon, IBM, Cisco, and Dell.

The advantages of the private cloud are:

- Heightened security measures and only the business using it has access to its resources. This is especially useful if your business requires personalized cloud capabilities.
- Customizable infrastructure that also meets personalization needs.

The disadvantage?

- Private cloud computing service models are often more expensive.

C. Hybrid Cloud: Hybrid means using private and public cloud infrastructure. Hybrid cloud models are especially useful if you want to adjust infrastructure to meet changing demands. To derive value, you'll need to segregate your database based on the sensitivity of your data. For example, you can move mission-critical operations to a private cloud and use a public cloud for less sensitive operation.

Hybrid advantages:

- Flexibility: You pay only for the resources you need and use and can easily scale those up or down.
- Security: You may choose to store sensitive data in a private environment and utilize public for other purposes.

Hybrid disadvantages:

- Complexity: Integrations may prove challenging between private and public environments.
- Manageability: It can be difficult to monitor various cloud environments without an IT partner like MicroTech to guide you.

D. Community Cloud: A group of companies with similar cloud requirements and shared cloud environments will often use a community cloud deployment model. Some examples of organizations that use community cloud models include research universities, police departments, and organizations with similar interests.

Community cloud advantages:

- Reduced costs: All participants share the costs of the cloud resources.
- Better collaboration: Companies in a community cloud can work together and share information easily.

Disadvantage:

- Bandwidth limitation: There's less room for on-demand scalability, as organizations in a shared network have fixed storage and bandwidth capacities.

Once you decide on the right cloud infrastructure for your organization, you'll need to figure out which suite of services offers the best capabilities at the most cost-effective rate. That's what we'll discuss in Section III.

III. Cloud Tools and Packages for Small Businesses

Over 92% of companies use cloud-based services. When it comes to programs and tools that enable shared digital work, Microsoft 365 is an indispensable asset. It uses a subscription model where you choose the best packages or bundles of applications for your organization's needs.



Microsoft 365 tools that are critical for small businesses include:

1. OneDrive: You can access OneDrive from anywhere, which is ideal for remote and distributed workforces. Share files, folders, and photos, customize access, and take advantage of protected document sharing.
2. SharePoint: SharePoint is Microsoft 365's version of an Intranet and is ideal for both small and rapidly growing businesses. SharePoint is particularly useful for storing confidential documents Secure, store, and customize files and folders by project, department, or divisions and access them on PCs, Macs, or mobile devices.
3. Outlook: Outlook is the industry standard for email. It's reliable with a clear interface. Users can access it on mobile, tablets, desktops, and the web. You can manage calendars, invitations, and schedule meetings and reminders from a single inbox.
4. Teams: Microsoft Teams means real-time, continuous collaboration, and reliable communication. You can chat with others through video or chat, have video-based meetings, and share files. Teams has different plan levels like Home, Business, Enterprise, and Education, offering the best capabilities for your specific organization.

Under the Microsoft 365 umbrella of programs, choose between these packages:

1. Business Basic: This package is \$6/per user/per month. You'll have the necessary Exchange service and web-based office service.
2. Business Standard: Priced at \$12.50/per user/per month. You get Exchange, SharePoint, Teams, and OneDrive. Additionally, you'll get the MS Office Suite with Word, Excel, and Excel.
3. Business Premium: Priced at \$22/per user/per month. The Premium Package includes a ProPlus option, three enterprise options, and a Home Version.

One of the biggest advantages of Microsoft 365 is that you don't have to overpay for tools you don't need. If your employees don't need certain tools, you don't even need to have all of them on the same plan-mix and match different programs.

So what if you've already onboarded cloud tools like Microsoft 365? Make sure you're deriving maximum value at the best possible cost. We'll tell you how in the next section.

IV. Cut Costs and Maximize the Potential of Your M365 Investment

Small businesses face the continual challenge of minimizing the costs of their current tools while improving adoption—and getting the most out of the tools they do have.

Feel like you're racking up costs, and not even using all of your tools? Consider:

- Cost-cutting
- Cost optimization
- Value optimization

Cost-cutting is more than just reducing prices. You can eliminate how much you spend on one or more applications, renegotiate with vendors, or consolidate multiple expenses into one vendor.

How can you cut costs?

- Cease payments for unused software and sunset ones that are end-of-life or obsolete.
- Pinpoint multiple applications that have the same functionalities, and determine if just one vendor can accomplish them.
- Downgrade premium products.
- Figure out alternative vendors and suppliers.

Cost optimization means driving cost and spending reduction while maximizing business value. Use cost optimization to determine if you're getting the best possible deal, assess whether you're overspending, and proactively communicate with a partner or vendor for the best deal.

Some cost optimization strategies are:

- Entering into new, more flexible agreements.
- Renegotiating vendor agreements.
- Exchanging one subscription for a less costly one.

Value optimization means deriving more business value for every tech dollar you spend. This is an essential strategy when you can't cut costs or get out of contracts.

Some ways to get the most value out of your tech stack are:

1. Take inventory of all the tools you use across your business. What's not being used? What's working well?
2. Assess the performance of the tools you have. Are they managing core functionalities in your organization?
3. Determine whether the tools you currently have will be long-term solutions. Make sure they can integrate with other tools and are flexible enough to scale along with your organization.

Work from anywhere with fewer costs and greater flexibility

Cloud computing software means universal accessibility, reduced costs, and greater security. As far as digital work applications, Microsoft 365 is widely regarded as the best subscription service in technology. Use it to propel your organization to the next productivity, growth, and connectivity level.

Do you want to know how to get the most out of your M365 investment at the best cost? MicroTech is here to help.

Schedule a Microsoft 365 Small Business Audit

Let MicroTech review your entire tech stack, audit your Microsoft licensing, right-size your platform investment, replace any duplicate tools, and see how we can support your adoption and roll-out of key applications.

Schedule Your Audit

About Us

Mediocre IT service is what many small businesses have come to accept as normal. But average, which is one step above poor service, costs small businesses in time, resources and out of pocket expenses. Discover how mediocre IT costs your business and discover how our 5 Star Service stacks up against whatever you have in place today.

www.microtechboise.com

+1 (208) 345 - 0054

